

# PATHWAY TO OUR FUTURE

## GUILDERLAND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



### **Draft** Goals & Recommendations from Guilderland Subcommittees

Input Received by October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023

#### **Subcommittees (in alphabetical order):**

- Agriculture (p.2)
- Economic Growth (p.4)
- Environment, Climate Change & Resiliency (p.5)
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- Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Historic Resources (p.14)
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## Subcommittee on Agriculture

1. We would like to see some type of light retail/ and farm service business on the western end of Rt 20. Being near the border of the Town of Princeton would possibly allow development with the negotiated use of Princetown's water resources. By creating a business zone in this area, the hope is to reduce traffic and reduce energy resources on the Route 20-155 corridor, by being closer to the residences of Western Guilderland.
2. In the RA 3 and RA 5 zone we would encourage flexible zoning options for increasing the density of development in areas where public and sewer is available. Even in minor subdivision projects, the hope is reducing the footprint of new homes by placing them on smaller lots and allowing the saved property be used for agricultural enterprise/open space. We understand this is a complex goal; soil type, drainage, and Albany County Health department requirements would have to be addressed.
3. An agriculture committee should be formed, with oversight by the town. The purpose of this committee would be it incentivize a farmer to utilize any open space or agricultural lands that the town owns or any suitable open private property, which could be worked and maintained so the property does not become overgrown. It would be another tool in the shed to keep farmlands in agriculture. Financial benefits would have to be developed for both the farmer and the landowner.
4. We encourage the town to continue the flexible conservation easement program (tiered payments depending on the length of the easement). We encourage the town to enter into partnerships with the variously affected school districts, in the hope that school tax abatements can be added to this program. Better communication from the town, about the availability and the tiered structure of this program would be an important improvement of this conservation tool.
5. Purchase of development rights: The town should seek resources to fund this program. We encourage the town to embark on this project in a more flexible matter. We would encourage the town to have flexible PDR's terms of 25 to 60 years. This way it would be a less costly and would allow future generations of residents to control their own resources. "Forever "forfeiture of property rights, limits many landowners' consideration of this program as a viable possibility. Possible ways to fund this project would be through substantial development fees on projects in town, which cost in excess of 5 million dollars.
6. The use of town funds should NOT be used for the purchase of agricultural land for the benefits of the residences of town. These properties should remain as tax generating enterprises.

7. Solar farms in town should be used on areas that do not impact prime agricultural soils or view sheds that have been identified as important to the town and neighborhoods. Large scale solar farms, however that term is defined, must be located near 3 phase power infrastructure (National Grid) with sufficient southern exposure. Regardless of present zoning, the town should map such delineated areas, which would be routinely brought up to date.
8. The sub-committee is concerned about the management of wildlife habitat, through well-planned forestry practices to preserve the town's large acreage of forests. Open space includes not only fields and cropland but also our numerous valuable woodlots. An offshoot of such concerns is the protection of wildlife, and the preservation of honey production and maple syrup production which are growing more popular, and lumber/firewood production. These activities are based on the responsible management of our forested areas. We do, however, recognize the important role played by NYDEC with regards to this issue.
9. When considering extension or establishment of new municipal water and/or sewage services in the undeveloped western portions of the Town, the potential specific and cumulative impacts of the inevitable future developments on the rural character of these areas should be assessed and weighed against the values of sustaining those qualities.
10. The subcommittee recognizes the value of the Watervliet Reservoir and the surrounding property as valuable open space within town. We encourage the town to explore options as a partnership with the City of Watervliet to preserve this open space. Also due to a lack of accessible aquatic locations in town, consideration might be give to limited access to the reservoir for educational and certain recreational activities. Finally, in partnership with Watervliet, both entities should seek acquire funds, through grants and other means, to clean up the backwater area which is visible from Route 20.

## Subcommittee on Economic Growth

**B.4 Business, Employment, and Fiscal Resources Goal: Establish and promote a diverse and strategic economic base that provides income, employment, and fiscal resources to the community in a manner that is compatible with the future land use plan and unique identity of Guilderland.**

- Objective 1. Continue and expand relationships and incentives available through federal, state, county and local organizations that support both the existing and future business community and promote Guilderland's economic future.
- Objective 2. Identify existing and potential centers for economic and community development and encourage appropriate development in those locations with marketing efforts, infrastructure investment and economic development incentives.
- Objective 3. Identify and establish the desired mix and scale of businesses in a manner that recognizes, and is sensitive to, the neighborhood setting and cultural diversity of the Town. This includes supporting home-based businesses.
- Objective 4. Promote the growth of local business. In doing so the Town should organize, advertise, and encourage local small businesses to participate in marketing programs, i.e., nationally recognized Small Business Week.
- Objective 5. Support agriculture in Guilderland and identify ways in which the town can make this possible.
- Objective 6. Develop strategies to attract well-paying, job-creating employers who will be able to provide employment opportunities for Guilderland's community and offers high quality of life.
- Objective 7. Encourage partnerships with higher learning institutions including the University at Albany, the Albany Nanotech Complex and related entities to promote economic development opportunities in the town.
- Objective 8. Seek relationships with educational schools/institutions as they play a crucial role in the well-being and future success of a community. A skilled and educated workforce can attract businesses to the area, leading to economic development and job opportunities.
- Objective 9. Explore developing a new village-like "planned community," built from the ground up, in the north-west corner of Guilderland. (*Perhaps an all Green Community.*)
- Objective 10. Periodically do a formal review of the Comprehensive Plan and report on progress towards its goals.

## Subcommittee on Environment, Climate Change, and Resiliency

Draft of final Goals from subcommittee:

### **Goals:**

#### **I. Protect the quality of life and Town character by reducing the impacts from climate. (Resiliency)**

##### **Objectives for Goal I.**

- a. By 2030 complete the 10 Action Steps necessary to achieve certification as a Climate Smart Community through the Climate Smart NY program <https://climatesmart.ny.gov/actions-certification/getting-started/>.
- b. Encourage and incentivize resiliency through town practices, procedures, rules and regulations wherever practicable. Including but not limited to improving stormwater infrastructure, protecting wetlands and other open space, reducing heat island by preserving and planting trees, managing town forests and open space for ecosystem health, reducing wildfire risk, creating alert systems and plans for extreme weather events, requiring conservation subdivision design wherever appropriate, and improving environmental education and outreach at Town parks.

#### **II. Reduce community wide contributions to climate change pollution by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. (Contribute less to climate change).**

##### **Objectives for Goal II.**

- a. By 2030 complete the 10 Action Steps necessary to achieve certification as a Climate Smart Community through the Climate Smart NY program <https://climatesmart.ny.gov/actions-certification/getting-started/>.
- b. Encourage and incentivize alternative clean energy production wherever feasible, including at Town owned facilities, improve clean transportation systems and associated infrastructure (EV Town fleet, EV charging infrastructure, bike lanes, etc), encourage alternative agricultural practices that sequester carbon (forest pastures, no-till seeding), encourage/require LED external lighting and fixtures that reduce ambient light pollution, and be proactive in siting renewable energy production.

## Subcommittee on Neighborhoods & Housing

### **HOUSING GOALS:**

- I. Provide a balanced blend of quality housing opportunities, including a desirable range of housing types and price ranges, which are affordable and accessible for residents.
- II. As a general rule, ensure that all apartment buildings in all zones are located near transportation centers and limited to a percentage of overall town housing to match the objective sources for actual demand (not based on developers' studies) to create a balanced distribution of housing in town.
- III. Create sustainability developments that truly focus on diverse housing, environmental improvements and economic growth. Develop green building standards and codes that promote energy efficiency, water conservation and the use of sustainable materials.

### **HOUSING OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Develop policies and programs that help maintain and strengthen the character, value and enjoyment of existing housing resources in established neighborhoods of Guilderland.

#### **Recommended actions:**

- a. AVOID OVER-DEVELOPMENT: especially in or near established neighborhoods.
  - b. CREATE PARKS: Develop a park for the Westmere area that includes areas for adults as well as playsets and facilities that kids can use.
- 2) Ensure that the town's zoning accommodates the need for housing diversity, and that supply matches need/demand.

#### **Recommended actions:**

- a. MULTI-RESIDENCE ZONES: The subcommittee on housing has determined that the current available apartment housing units are sufficient for the demand in Town. We especially recommend against any future zoning changes for any additional MR zones.<sup>1</sup>
- b. CURRENT CODE: The town code contains a variety of diverse types of housing (country hamlet, planned unit developments, senior housing, etc.). The subcommittee

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Csaposs disagreed with this recommended action.

recommends adding some additional categories for “affordable housing” in the next section of this report.

- 3) Encourage affordable housing opportunities for seniors and those with special needs, etc., that will allow residents to remain in town in their homes despite their changing housing care requirements.

**Recommended actions:**

- a. **ENCOURAGE SMALLER HOMES:** Encourage one-story ranch homes for seniors and people with special needs, etc., either in existing established neighborhoods or in new 1 to 1 ½ story “cottage-type” housing developments.
  - b. **PROMOTE AGE-IN-PLACE PROGRAMS:** Promote town programs like Guilderland Senior Services which allow seniors to age in place in their own homes with a range of services.
- 4) Identify appropriate sites and incentives for the creation of housing options that are needed but not adequately provided for in the marketplace. Houses that are +/- 1,000-1,500 sq. ft. are one of the most desirable types of housing, part of the missing middle housing. These are homes that are more affordable than the single-family homes currently being built. To meet this objective, the committee recommends exploring the following:

**Recommended actions:**

- a. **INCENTIVIZE SMALLER HOMES:** These are generally understood to be one-story ranch type houses or cottages that can be “starter homes” or “downsizing” for senior citizens, or smaller more affordable houses for low to middle income working families.
  - i. **Create a new “Affordable Home Zone” category in the code.** Create a new zoning category for developers to do smaller homes (+/- 1,000 to 1,500 sq. ft.) on smaller lot sizes than currently allowed in the zoning code (for example, if a zone calls for ¼ acre lot sizes, allow for 1/8 acre lot sizes for 1200 sq. ft. homes in these developments; that way the ¼ acre lot can be divided into two 1/8 acre lots with smaller houses on them). Setbacks would be adjusted accordingly, while still providing sufficient buffers between homes. This would incentivize building smaller homes because it would allow the developer to make the same amount of profit as larger homes on larger lots.
  - ii. **Identify which areas of town this type of development would be suitable in.**
- b. **GIVE TAX INCENTIVES TO RENOVATING OLDER SMALLER HOMES:** Re-invest in established older neighborhoods. If possible, create tax incentives for renovating and updating smaller homes in established neighborhoods to make them more “sellable”. Residents could make improvements to their homes

(adding a bathroom, bedroom, remodeling a kitchen) and get a tax break on their town property taxes.

- i. The Town should encourage renovations, enhancements, and additions to existing homes in established neighborhoods as an alternative to the sprawl created by a continuous pattern of new construction. One way to advance this goal would be the implementation of a program under which assessment increases associated with such improvements could be waived for a period of time or, alternatively, be phased in over a period of time. A program of this nature could be put in place for both single-family and multi-family properties.
- c. AFFORDABLE HOUSING REQUIRMENTS: While not requiring quotas, the subcommittee strongly encourages that a certain number of units in each housing development be ‘affordable’ housing units. (“Affordable” in the context of apartment units is defined as rent that is equal to or less than 30% of an average renter’s annual income). If possible, add provisions to the zoning code that require this. If not, work with developers and use the site planning process to encourage this.
- d. ATTACHED DWELLING UNITS/APPARTMENTS: Develop policies for accessory dwelling units (ADUs), either attached or detached, as an opportunity for alternative housing options in single-family residential neighborhoods while preserving the character of these neighborhoods. The intent is to provide low-cost housing options, slow suburban sprawl, and to allow more efficient use of existing infrastructure. Consider having the Town join the Plus One ADU Program of New York State.<sup>2</sup>

The Subcommittee recommends that the following conditions apply to all ADUs:

- (1) All ADUs must require a Special Use Permit. The SUP would address architectural character and guidelines so that the ADU is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood.
- (2) The ADU may be up to 1,000 sq. ft., or 30% of the size of the principal structure, whichever is smaller.
- (3) The maximum height of the detached structure should not be taller than the principal structure.
- (4) One of the residences must be owner-occupied.
- (5) The accessory dwelling would require a minimum of one additional off-street parking space. Encourage locating ADUs close to bus transit.

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<sup>2</sup> The Plus One ADU Program provides grants to units of local government and not-for-profit organizations that are committed to crafting community-specific programs for generating safe, quality ADUs. By working with units of local government and community development partners, the program provides a full-service program to support low- and middle- income single-family homeowner occupants who wish to build a new ADU on their property or improve an existing ADU that needs to be brought into compliance with local and state code requirements (see. <https://hcr.ny.gov/plus-one-adu-program>).



- (6) The accessory dwelling unit must meet the setback requirements of the primary structure or the zoning requirements on which the parcel is located, whichever is more stringent.
- (7) Neither the ADU nor the primary residence can be used as a short-term rental (e.g., Airbnb, etc.)
- (8) The occupant of the ADU need not be a relative of the owner of the principal residence.
- (9) If the ADU is rented by the owner of the principal residence, it cannot be subleased.

### **TOWN CHARACTER – GOALS:**

- I. Preserve and enhance Guilderland’s identity, image, and quality of life; and maintain and strengthen the distinction between the Town’s developed and rural areas, as well as the distinction between the town’s neighborhoods and commercial areas.
- II. Prevent any trends that move Guilderland towards the look of a city or large commercial town; namely, avoid putting all commercial businesses along the Western Avene Corridor. Instead, spread them out thoughtfully in appropriately zoned areas in town that are in conformance with the town’s height limit and with landscaping and buffers to clearly separate them from the residential areas with native species landscaping
- III. Prioritize residents’ quality of life while encouraging small businesses to grow and flourish.
- IV. Town character should recognize the abundance of ethnic groups in the town and encourage and promote diversity.
- V. Establish resilience goals/strategies that reduce the Town of Guilderland’s vulnerability to potential natural hazards and events. Reduce risk to future developments through a

careful planning process, and take steps to protect existing infrastructure and natural resources.

**TOWN CHARACTER OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Establish guidelines to ensure that future residential and commercial development is of a scale and design that is appropriate from both a neighborhood and townwide perspective.

**Recommended action:**

- a. The town should proactively select one or two designated areas in town on main roads (avoiding Western Avenue) that have enough population to support small non-residential commercial uses in BNRP or LB districts in order to bring light offices, dining, professional services and employment opportunities to areas that need those services.
- 2) Identify boundaries of existing, or locations for potential, mixed-use community centers or hamlets (similar to the Village of Altamont).
- 3) Create neighborhood “community centers” and identify necessary transportation improvements for each area that will address traffic calming and other pedestrian safety issues.
- 4) Work with residents in Town’s traditional neighborhood corridors<sup>3</sup> to generate strategies for enhancing their existing environments, and require town leaders to provide updates on progress achieved with the Comprehensive Plan’s goals and objectives to each neighborhood corridor community periodically.
- 5) Ensure adequate, but not excessive parking.

**Recommended actions:**

- a. **TERMINOLOGY:** Change the language of the Zoning Code from “required” to “recommended” parking spaces.
- b. **RECOMMENDED PARKING LOT SPACES:** The number of parking spaces in the code is excessive and underutilized in many commercial and residential apartment complexes, often causing stormwater runoff. Better to recommend less parking in the code and allow the developer to argue reasons for more parking spaces.

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<sup>3</sup> The term ‘neighborhood corridors’ is intended to refer to areas of town with unique identities and needs that have their own specific neighborhood Comprehensive Plans, i.e., McKownville, Westmere, Guilderland Hamlet, Guilderland Center, Carman Road area, Altamont, and West (rural) Guilderland.

- c. BANKED PARKING: Banked parking spaces should be required for all projects to allow for future growth.
  - d. CONNECTED PARKING LOTS: Adjust site plan code requirements to encourage connected parking lots for adjacent businesses that filter traffic away from residential areas to a single traffic signal.
- 6) Support continued use of viable agricultural lands; preserve open space, and protect and preserve natural resources.

**Recommended actions:**

- a. NATURAL RESOURCES: The town should compile a list of its important natural resources which deserve special protection and draft code provisions protecting these resources (i.e., the Pine Bush Preserve, the Watervliet Reservoir, the Helderberg Escarpment viewshed, etc.).
  - i. Draft Code provisions to protect the Pine Bush Preserve as a special area, similar to the Town of Colonie’s code provisions for the Pine Bush.
  - ii. In light of the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision limiting the Army Corps of Engineers’ designation of wetlands to only those that flow into U. S. navigable waters, immediately draft a new town code provision to protect our town’s wetlands, as other towns are doing (see the Town of New Paltz’s code provision, the upcoming code provision in the Town of Bethlehem, etc.). This will serve many purposes including preventing the destruction of important natural ecosystems, as well as preventing uncontrollable stormwater runoff throughout the town.
  - iii. Protect views of the Helderberg Escarpment.
- b. INCENTIVIZE FARMLANDS: Create a way to encourage continued use of farmlands for farming. Continue support of farmers’ markets in town.
- c. ESTABLISH CONSERVATION PROGRAMS: Continue to establish programs like the town’s Conservation Easement program, which gives tax incentives to residents for conserving their lands.
  - i. Actively reach out to land trusts and partner with them to purchase open spaces.
- d. ENCOURAGE USE OF VACANT PROPERTIES: Encourage Development of abandoned or vacant property for new housing and commercial uses, rather than breaking ground in open or green spaces in town.
  - i. Create tax incentives where possible to encourage developers to use already used property (e.g., vacant retail space in Pyramid, Westlawn Bowling Center, Jiffy Lube at Rt 155 & Western, Foundry Road/Western

Ave properties, Rustic Barn, etc.) for new projects in town, rather than building new structures on undisturbed lands.

- e. SOLAR AND WIND FARMS: Encourage green energy in appropriately sited areas that will not cause a negative impact on any town or residential natural or historic viewsheds.
  - i. Do not allow major solar or wind farms in residential areas.
  - ii. Promote use of solar panels as much as possible on (a) town properties, such as the town hall, the Nott Road garage, the school bus garage, etc. and (b) on large private commercial structures such as perhaps Crossgates Mall and the Guilderland Center Industrial Park.
  - iii. Encourage residential rooftop solar panels, perhaps with tax incentives.
- 7) Retain and strengthen the character of Guilderland’s residential neighborhoods, and develop building, landscaping and signage guidelines for commercial areas to create a cohesive and aesthetically pleasing visual environment and sense of place rather than a sprawling suburban patchwork.

**Recommended actions:**

- a. ZONING CODE UPDATES: To achieve this objective, improve the quality of site design, with an emphasis on harmonious signage, landscaping, lighting, planting and building façade designs to fit in with a small town look for commercial and business retail zones, similar to what Altamont has done.
  - i. Make initial sign permit reviews part of the initial site plan process.
- 8) Ensure that new development does not result in adverse impacts such as noise, odor, and vibrations, unapproved signage, or an undue burden on town infrastructure.

**Recommended actions:**

- a. ENFORCEMENT: Hire additional zoning personnel to actively enforce violations in the code for these items townwide. Actively seek out violators, quickly respond to residents’ complaints, and take appropriate action to enforce the code.
- b. FINES: Re-examine the code to determine if there are appropriate fines for these violations. Draft provisions to impose fines for successive, continuing or escalating violations that are strong enough to act as deterrents, and to help avoid the necessity of costly litigation.
- 9) Encourage street tree planting and other aesthetic improvements in residential neighborhoods using native/non-invasive species.

**Recommended actions:**

- a. **TOWN ARBORIST.** Hire a town arborist to evaluate trees in town, protect heritage trees from development, and enforce the code provisions regulating the amount of trees that can be cut down for any development project. Include fines in the town code for violations of town code provisions on tree cutting. The town arborist should also review and provide comments on all site plans and submit those comments to the Planning Board and/or Zoning Board for implementation as conditions to any site plan.
  
  - b. **IMPROVE THE CHARACTER OF EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS:**
    - i. Provide more sidewalks in residential areas ~~were~~ desired by residents.
    - ii. Provide attractive historic (lamppost) streetlighting that meets the zoning code requirements in denser areas (McKownville, Altamont, Guilderland Hamlet) to enhance town character.
    - iii. Provide funds for the garden club and/or other volunteer organizations to plant flower beds in areas along prominent roadways and intersections (as Albany and Saratoga do).
- 10) Seek out potential public and private partnerships to implement needed improvements. This includes land trusts, business organizations, community leaders, etc.

**Recommended actions:**

- a. **GRANTS:** Actively seek out and apply for all appropriate grants for town improvements.
- b. **TREE PLANTING PROGRAM:** Set up a town program, run by the town arborist, to encourage tree planting, with a special requirement in the town code for developers to replace cut trees with a proportionate number of new, well-established trees. This will not only add to town character, but also will add to green initiatives/climate change protections.

## Subcommittee on Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Historic Resources

Almost two decades later, the *Rural Guilderland* document is more relevant than ever.

The “Community Vision” presented in the 2005 Rural Guilderland: Open Space and Farmland Protection Plan (hereafter, RG) commanded an ever-increasing adherence and urgency over the ensuing years. [Our group] fully endorses the “Concepts for Conservation” and the “Concepts for Development” expressed in this document.

**Connect our recreation assets in one long, arcing corridor.** We urge the creation of a “Rural Greenway and Trail System” (RG 2-3), that would link the Town’s recreational assets from Albany Country Club through Nott Road Park, Western Turnpike Golf Course, Tawasentha Park, Vosburgh Road trail system and Keenholts Park to the Watervliet Reservoir. Important historic sites along this imagined corridor, such as the Nott Mansion, the Guilderland Glass House and the Battle of the Normanskill should be afforded special prominence. The means of connection would most likely be acquisition of intervening parcels and/or establishing easement agreements with landholders for trails of different sorts.

**Maintain the unique character of our traditional settlements.** In the same section of RG, we find this statement, which continues to resonate deeply: “The compact settlement pattern of the town’s rural historic hamlets should be maintained and a countryside greenbelt around hamlets should be preserved” (RG 2-3). To maintain the sense of place and community cohesion of the traditionally rural localities of Guilderland (Altamont, Guilderland Center, and other smaller hamlets), these areas should indeed be surrounded by a greenbelt, before they are swallowed up in residential development. This could be accomplished by creating special zoning around them; for example, by imposing RA5 zoning (where it does not already exist) for all parcels falling within a certain distance of the outer bounds of these two communities. The need for a five-acre minimum lot size for the entirety of western Guilderland was a topic that surfaced repeatedly in our discussions. The recommendation to “Provide greenbelt areas around hamlets and between developments and settlements” in RG (4-7) returns to this topic in more specific terms: “open space or greenbelts provide relief between settled areas and help each hamlet or settlement maintain its unique identity as an individual place”; this is a position [we fully support.]

**Allow limited development.** We likewise endorse the sections appealing to the Town to “maintain roadside rural character” and “allow *limited* new development that is *consistent with* Rural Guilderland character” (RG 2-4). Our discussion about “cluster” developments that would keep open space open and that would benefit from the infrastructure, when available, of municipal water and sewer, seems to follow the same lines of thinking found in this section of RG (2-4): “New country hamlets should be focused in areas with existing water and sewer infrastructure supply. They should be sited in locations that connect to existing development” (RG 2-4). However, despite frequent reference to “cluster” style development, no one in our group was aware of any examples of this form of residential development

within Guilderland. Our group also acknowledged that extending this infrastructure beyond its current reach does little more than encourage the encroachment of suburban development in an area that wishes to remain rural.

**Minimize intensity of new development.** Unlike the original RG position on development intensity, we believe a radical re-zoning of the entire “valley” (the term used in RG), which currently is zoned RA-3, should be rezoned to RA-5. In this sense, we go beyond the 2005 recommendations in urging a much less intensive development, *in addition to* maintaining a clear and strong commitment to preserving farmlands and forested areas through conservation easements, tax relief and other similar policies. “The development intensity allowed by the town’s current zoning ordinance... should be reduced to more closely match the capacity of the environment and the community’s vision for appropriate growth” was argued in RG (4-9). Either this recommendation was ignored in 2005, or implementation was ineffectual, because in the 18 years since the publication of RG, residents of western Guilderland feel the incursion of new residential developments and the pressure they place on roadways and infrastructure more severely than ever.

New proposals for development of larger tracts of land should be required to maintain mature trees wherever possible. Use of eminent domain for the benefit of private businesses should be vetted in a public forum to determine if such is considered in the best interests of the community.

### **Historic Sites**

We recommend the comprehensive plan address the repair and maintenance of historic sites owned by the Town of Guilderland: Mynderse Frederick House, Schoolcraft House and The Ballet Barn. Resources should be dedicated to preserving these structures. If the town invests in these sites, the Mynderse Frederick and Schoolcraft houses may be suited to events similar to those at Cherry Hill in Albany. Some events are free, but others would have a fee, such as tasting events. Mynderse Frederick gardens are maintained by the Guilderland Garden Club, perhaps smaller gardens could be established at the Schoolcraft House. This could be a joint effort between the garden club and the historical society. The Town would need to provide resources to purchase plants for a garden at the Schoolcraft House. Some perennials would be available for transfer from the Mynderse Frederick house.

As the historic sites are under the purview of Parks and Recreation, information about the properties should be listed in the Town website under Parks and Recreation. As programs develop, the site would be updated with events. The Garden Club has a holiday event each year. This should be advertised on the Town Website.

Alternatively, the Town website could add a link to provide information about the town history and historic sites. This would provide a place to list the various historic markers that are found throughout Guilderland.

DRAFT



## Subcommittee on Transportation & Mobility

### Updated 2000 Comprehensive Plan B.2 Transportation and Mobility Goal

Provide safe, convenient, and efficient transportation options for people and goods within, through and around the Town of Guilderland, which are supportive of the Town's future land use plan and which minimize the impact of traffic on the Town's character and quality of life.

### Thoughts/Strategies Identified by Subcommittee Members On How Each Objective Might Be Implemented

#### **1. Promote an attractive and efficient transportation network that integrates pedestrians, bicycles, automobiles and public transit.**

Increase the number of 'Share the Road' signs on some Town roads where there are no sidewalks. There are two currently yellow 'Share The Road' signs on Willow Street, which indicate a person walking, a person biking and a person driving. There is one sign going in each direction between Western Avenue and Siver Road.

For new housing developments and apartment complexes being constructed, look into integrating shared paths (bike and pedestrian) and sidewalks being a mandate to be built into the plan connecting the new neighborhoods to the existing neighborhoods/sidewalks close by.

Explore ways to increase public transportation West of Rt. 155 on Western Avenue and Carmen Road. Having increased public transportation routes will benefit our expanding Town and it is more environmentally friendly vs everyone driving a car.

Establish clear responsibilities within town agencies to coordinate between modes, develop and stage and implement connectivity projects. Consider new town funding sources for non-highway mode projects; e.g., Transit Tax districts, Employer transit fees and zoning breaks for non-car travel accommodations.

#### **2. Enhance pedestrian mobility in all areas of Town. Expand sidewalk and multi-use trail system to better link community centers, shopping and employment areas, recreation areas, and neighborhoods.**

For the protection of children and young adults especially, the areas in Town should be marked where there are schools, playgrounds, and parks with traffic signs and road markings that are visible for the driver so they know they are going into a "special zone" where there are children either walking or biking.

Develop walkable nodes of neighborhood businesses that would then be connected through regional mobility networks (e.g.; small grocery store, small strip mall with the neighborhoods, etc.).

## Bikes and paths:

- For workers, customers, and school kids, particularly important to low income workers.
- Should be available during all seasons by plowing.
- Encourage bike racks/safe storage for workers.
- Inclement weather backup system.
- Landscaping and route signing for trails.
- Trail maps on phone apps.
- Integrate pine-bush trails.
- Identify and prioritize “nodes” (E.g. the library, schools, parks, large shopping plazas) to assure easy access from the ped/trail system.
- Create programs for neighborhood, businesses and organizations to “adopt” and care for individual trail and sidewalk segments.

### **3. Explore ideas to improve the pedestrian experience. On arterial roads this may include traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures, reviews of speed limits, street landscaping and visual aesthetics.**

Evaluate some of the busiest intersections and possibly change the timing of the traffic lights to allow for more time for pedestrians to safely cross that intersection.

Alternative vision for existing structures in town might engage developers in our community’s vision for change.

Install benches under trees around Town for people to rest on their walks.

Install more bike racks around town near businesses.

Request NYSDOT to do specific pedestrian needs studies. Vest pocket parks, benches, summertime floral displays. Encourage pleasing and coordinated architectural motifs. Timely sidewalk snow plowing, regular reviews of sidewalk inventory for needed repairs, sweeping and signing. Historic sign/markers and displays geared for pedestrians. Maybe require or incentive businesses keep adjacent trails/sidewalks clean and passable.

### **4. Create a town-wide network of bike routes composed of trails, sidewalks and low traffic streets. Design it to encourage errands and other short-trip trip travel, not just recreational use. Take special care to safely accommodate electric bikes and to assure the safety of school age children.**

Have multi-use paths and increased sidewalks, especially in areas of the town where public transportation (CDTA) routes have been cut and decreased. Example: West of Rt. 155 via Western Avenue.

Look to tie in Town wide network of bike paths, and sidewalks connecting Guilderland to the *Albany County Rail Trail*. Guilderland can join neighboring towns and cities: Bethlehem, Delmar, Voorheesville and the City of Albany. Have designated parking areas in Guilderland near the paths - Voorheesville and Slingerlands have parking areas set up for individuals and families to park and ride on the path.

Have CDPHP Bike Share Programs at different locations throughout the Town, (Examples: Hamilton Square, Hannaford on Carmen Road or Town Hall, on Carmen Road near new Roundabout at East/West Lydius Street), as many busses do not go past this location on a regular basis, especially on weekends.

Begin a Townwide incentive, "Bike Guilderland Week". Bike Guilderland Week is held one week per month, 12 months a year. Encourage residents to participate in this fun and healthy program, asking them to share about it on Social Media to promote this idea. Participation would be required at least one day during the designated week. Develop a cool hashtag for people to use: #GuilderlandBicycleWeek.

Residents who bike to work or bike to shop during the designated weeks can register their treks online with the Town. We could have an MS Forms site created to capture this data. After 12 months, those who participated in all 12 months of biking can earn a cool 'patch' and certificate from Town Board Members at a presentation at a Town Board Meeting or maybe a presentation at one of the pavilion's at Tawasentha.

The Town can blast out reminders to all residents about Bike Week- be on the lookout for neighbors and friends on bikes and don't forget to 'Share the Road'.

Have a contest for patch design from Town residents. Have Town members vote on top 5 patch designs to pick a winner.

Work with the school district to make network infrastructure work for school needs and school bus routes. (e.g.; fewer school bus stops by having safe routes for students to do more walking.) Electric bike charging stations in commercial areas. Trail blazers and pavement markings as needed.

**5. Identify programs and incentives to reduce traffic on arterial roads, single-occupancy vehicle use in particular. For example, demand transit (i.e. CDTA Flex,) work from home days, and enhanced bus services where densities support it. Also work with state transportation agencies to assure early deployment of beneficial technologies such as advanced signal control.**

Work with CDTA to bring weekend bus service to Hamilton Square, and areas beyond Crossgates, and an express bus to downtown Albany/return to Guilderland for residents who work in downtown Albany. Riders currently have to take 2 buses to get to downtown Albany or other areas. If a bus is late, riders will miss the bus they need to take at the next pickup location. There are 3 buses in that run directly from Bethlehem to downtown Albany.

Develop a program such as the Universal Bus Pass for encouraging large employers (Walgreen, Market 32, apartment complexes, etc. and business associations) to establish a partnership with CDTA to subsidize transit fares (and services) for low wage service workers. Leverage from the Downtown Albany Business Improvement District, Capital District Chamber of Commerce and Walmart in Glenmont and Washington Ave. how this program can be used in Guilderland.

Autos and transit: Bus shelters, CDTAflex, Electric Drive Share, and installation of Bike Cycle! stations in parks.

Construction of higher density housing to encourage increased public transit ridership.

Have NYSDOT regularly review its oversize load routes and permitted times of day.

**6. Make sure the transportation needs of the town's retail, commercial, and service businesses are met so they may prosper. And actively coordinate pedestrian, bicycling and transit amenities with residential and commercial development proposals.**

Encourage connecting and sharing of proximate parking lots in commercial areas. Have business events that offer discounts to people arriving by bicycle.

Better, attractive pedestrian connections for the stretch from Stuyesant Plaza, past Crossgates, to the trendy jewelry shops, bistros and other businesses on Western Ave.

CDTAflex and bus service during the week and weekends at retail, commercial and services businesses.

**7. Have the Thruway better serve Guilderland and the other localities it passes through. Configured in the 1950s as a rural interstate between Albany and Schenectady, it inadequately serves this now urbanized area. Adding exits and removing local tolls will draw traffic off nearby arterial roads. The State did this for the Buffalo and NYC areas and should now do it for the Capital District.**

**Background:**

When the Thruway was planned in the 1940s, the area between Albany and Schenectady was predominantly farmland. There is only one exit between their downtowns. Subsequent Capital District freeways, built in the 1960s and 70s, anticipated and provided for urban growth by having exits every couple of miles. Thus the region's northern and eastern suburbs have freeways that relieve their arterial streets.

In the ensuing 70 years Guilderland's population of 7,000 went up over five-fold, gaining over 30,000 more, and Colonie's gaining 55,000 more. Yet these urbanized towns have no urban freeway, only a rural one designed to discourage local travel.

**Concept:**

The objective is to better integrate the Thruway (I-90 and I-87) into the Capital Region's transportation network by transforming it from an inter-regional limited access facility into one also serving regional traffic. Such means involves repurposing the Thruway between Exit 22 (Selkirk) and Exit 25A (Schenectady) by removing tolls on local traffic and adding several exits. This will draw traffic off nearby arterial roads in Bethlehem, Albany, Colonie, Guilderland, and Rotterdam.

**Benefits:**

The principal benefit is the elimination of circuitous and inefficient travel burdening nearby arterial roads, mainly Western Avenue in Guilderland, Central Avenue in Colonie, Route 9W in Bethlehem, and several arterial streets in Albany. It's also a chance to better connect the Thruway with the many warehouses and truck terminals along the corridor.

Drawing traffic from the local system means fewer total vehicle miles of travel. The Thruway's wider lanes and controlled access will improve net safety. Ancillary benefits are safer local streets, less fuel consumption, reduced travel times, and lower pollution. Opportunities for trails, small parks, and other amenities may arise during design.

### **Staging:**

A project of this scope will take a decade to fully develop, design and build. However, it can be done in stages to bring some early benefits.

The first stage is to eliminate tolls for local traffic, to be done as soon as possible. The existing electronic tolling system makes this relatively easy. That system is already programmed to make travel free for one local exit pair (between exits 24 and 25A, but not including 25.) It should be reprogrammed to make travel toll free for vehicles that both enter and leave the 24 mile stretch from Selkirk to I-88 in Princetown. This would preserve Thruway revenues derived from long haul traffic using this stretch.

The second stage, planning and building new exits at key points, would take more time and resources, but it would have a more significant impact on reducing congestion on arterial roads and improving mobility for local residents. At least four or five new local arterial connections should be considered, and more if suburban growth continues. It may also be worth considering extending the toll-free stretch to Amsterdam in the west and to Coeymans in the south.

### **Implementation Considerations:**

A project of this magnitude requires strong support from the general public, elected officials, and various government entities including municipalities, regional authorities, State and Federal agencies.

Federal and State highway funding is limited and allotted by region, so a coalition among municipalities and other groups is needed to compete successfully for Capital Region funds.

State-level policy decisions will also be necessary, such as who will maintain the free Thruway section, how that maintenance will be funded, and how to minimize the impact on Thruway revenue.

### **General Strategy:**

The first step is to develop and demonstrate strong public support for the concept. This means creating awareness of the opportunity among those who will benefit. Point out that there is precedent for toll-free Thruway sections, as evidenced by the existing toll-free sections in the NYC suburbs and Buffalo. Form working groups with benefiting towns and interested organizations. Get press coverage and lobby political leaders for their support. Finding champions in both the Legislative and Executive branches of State Government is essential.

Soon after, work with the State and the agencies that will develop and implement the concept. These agencies want to help but have their own set of concerns, such as capital finance limitations, loss of revenue, institutional and legal barriers, and negative impacts on particular constituencies. Help them develop the information they need to prioritize the concept on the Capital Region's transportation agenda.

Overall, the proposal to remove tolls and add exits on the Thruway between Exit 22 and Exit 25A is a sound one that would have many benefits for Guilderland and the Capital Region. It is ambitious but it is doable.

**8. Support planning efforts with adjoining municipalities and regional entities such as: Albany County, the Capital Region Transportation Council (CRTC), the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA), the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC), the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and the New York State Thruway Authority.**

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